



Center for   
Disability Services

*Where people get better at life™*

**Community is the  
Foundation of our Success**

*2019 Annual Report*

## A letter from our CEO

2019 was an exciting year at the Center for Disability Services — a **year of growth** to accommodate changing program and community needs. It was also a **year of recognition**, celebrating our Mail Fulfillment Center and wonderful work opportunities involving individuals with disabilities.

The New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) bestowed two statewide honors on the Center, naming Mail Fulfillment Center employee Mike Lizzi “Employee of the Year” and the Center as “Member Agency of the Year.” We’re so proud of Mike and all of his accomplishments. Every day, his efforts help his co-workers and make the Center a better place to work. We are also honored as an agency to be recognized among the other 600 NYSID member agencies.

The Center’s education programs and consultant services remain a hallmark in this region. Langan School programs in Albany and Queensbury added three classrooms and over 20 students. The advisory services our staff provide to public schools also continue to grow, providing much-needed guidance to our communities.

In 2019, the Center opened a new six-bed home in Delmar, the first new residential site in many years. We also received approval for a new eight-bed respite house at Prospect Center in Queensbury,

and anticipate breaking ground in early 2020 with a late 2020 opening.

The Center started Day Habilitation Without Walls, a new day service that enables participants to achieve greater inclusion. Future expansion is planned in the Capital District as well as in Warren and Washington County.

Our Down Syndrome Aim High Resource Center, under the leadership of Sue Williams, is poised to boost opportunities for those we support.

Renovations are underway at St. Margaret’s Center, modernizing “home” for 74 children and 20 young adults, including ventilator-dependent children. We anticipate completion in 2020.

Rory, a long-time resident of St. Margaret’s, was adopted and has a new home, a spotlight story in this annual report. We will miss having Rory at St. Margaret’s, but we are just so proud of her and our staff for a job well done.

Another highlight is the Adirondack Lilly Fundraiser and our teen fundraising sensation Gabriel Donovan — a special young man who truly has a gift of caring for others.

As we focus on today, COVID-19 has challenged us all to maintain safety for individuals we support and our staff, while maintaining



creativity in service delivery for those living in our programs and those living at home.

Telemedicine, teletherapy, and emergency dental care are examples of innovation meeting demand, and the Center keeping to our mission. Our school staff remain committed to serving our students through remote tools. Residential and Day Program staff are teaming up to care for individuals in our homes and offering contact-free delivery of craft supplies and groceries to participants if needed.

The Pillars of the Center, our dedicated employees, have unified to ensure the needs of individuals we support and their families continue to be met, regardless of their location. **Our commitment to our mission is stronger than ever.**

We cannot thank and recognize our staff enough. Their hard work and dedication is the cornerstone of what makes the Center the place **‘Where People Get Better at Life.’**

**Gregory J. Sorrentino**  
President/Chief Executive Officer

## A letter from our Chairperson

The theme of this annual report is **‘Community is the Foundation of our Success.’** While the word **community** is easy to say, its meaning is far more complex. Community is not so much a place or a building as it is a feeling. And a very good feeling — one that embodies care and help and hope and that is anchored in trust. That is what we mean when we say that **community is our foundation, and at the core of our purpose.** Because **community at its essence is all about people, in our case those we support and Center staff who dedicate themselves to individuals with disabilities and their families. This is the Center Community.**

Right now, the world is challenged with the Coronavirus and COVID-19. But this unprecedented event only redoubles our commitment to providing expert care and the best

possible services to individuals with disabilities and their families, and to empowering every day **our community.** Today, the Center is benefitting from the strategic plan it put in place two years ago. That plan set the stage for innovations like Telemedicine, which are in place and working to keep the people we support safe and providing them with 24/7 access to expert medical resources.

The spirit and execution of **community** is happening in every aspect of the Center: at Center Health Care, at St. Margaret’s, at all of our Residences and in our Adult Programs and via our Transportation Services. I could not be prouder of Center staff in this especially challenging time. It is they who continue to innovate as they provide care and hope to our community, and I know you join me in thanking them.



I am humbled and honored to be part of the Center team — and community — as we do everything in our power to ensure that the Center will always be the place **‘Where People Get Better at Life.’**

**Jeffrey Killeen**  
Chairperson of the Board

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# Programs that support health and development, and build a sense of community

In 2019, the Center experienced great successes with several of its supportive services and programs, building on a foundation of community, inclusion, and independence.

## St. Margaret's Center

A renovation project began at St. Margaret's Center, the Center's Pediatric and Young Adult Skilled Nursing Facility, to modernize bedrooms. With these newer, state-of-the-art homes for residents, the Center can provide greater comfort and nurturing to support learning and growth.

## Adult Services

The Without Walls Program (WOW) continues to grow! WOW focuses on getting individuals involved in the community, and the program currently supports over 30 individuals. WOW enhances each individual's ability to navigate, interact, build relationships, and live their lives as independently as possible as a member of their community.

## Educational Services

The Clover Patch Preschool site in Glenville installed a Snoezelen (controlled multisensory environment) room in 2019. This therapy for autism and other developmental disabilities places the person in a soothing and stimulating environment. The new room is a unique and fun way to learn — children can interact with their different senses, and experience the benefits of Snoezelen's calming effect.

The Kevin G. Langan School in Albany and Langan School at Prospect Center in Queensbury added new school-age classrooms, increasing the schools' capacities to provide rich educational and childhood experiences for students.

## Residential Services

Thanks to grant funding through the New York Statewide Health Care Facility Transformation Program, the Center was able to install Telemedicine Alternatives ER and Urgent Care specialized for individuals with disabilities in each of the Center's residences, enabling direct access to telemedicine services. With easier access to health care, residents can reach their fullest potential.

The Center also was able to complete construction on a new residence in Delmar, which will provide residents with modern and accessible housing.

## Clover Patch Camp

Capital improvements began at Clover Patch — the Center's summer camp for children and adults with special needs. These improvements include an accessible pool and sleeping cabins, so campers have more opportunities to make new friends, create everlasting memories, and have fun!

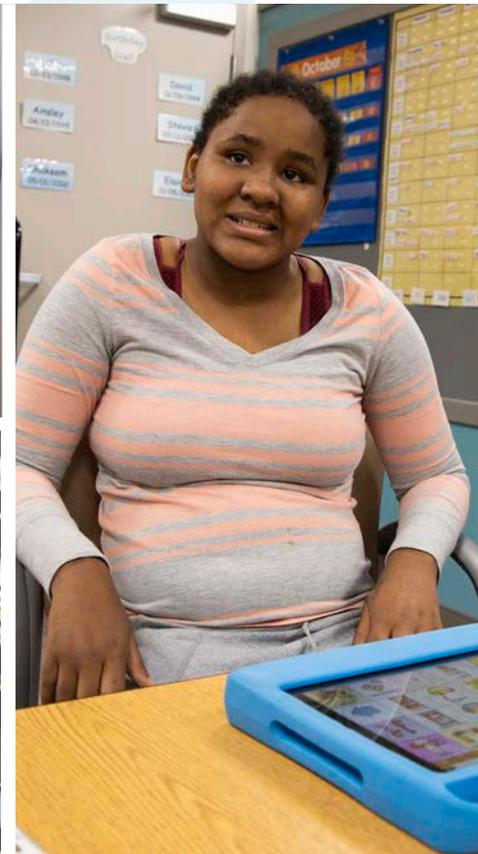
## Center Health Care

In 2019, Center Health Care realized its goal of providing more comprehensive eye health to patients. Proper eye care can be a challenge for individuals with disabilities. This new, state-of-the-art eye screening and spot fitting equipment is helping improve the lives of individuals the Center supports.

*The Center is proud to offer some of the most innovative programs in the area for individuals with disabilities and their families*

**+20**

*Since we expanded our Langan School with three new classrooms, we have welcomed over twenty new students*



## A Forever Home for Rory

The Center supports individuals with many different needs and goals, and we see triumphs and challenges of all sizes daily. One of the most heartwarming stories of 2019



involves Rory, an 8-year-old girl who had spent almost all of her life at St. Margaret's Center.

Rory is a familiar face to the Center and the community. She shared the stage with Lydia Kulbida and John Gray at the 2014 Center telethon, melting hearts as a toddler full of joy. Rory came to St.

Margaret's shortly after birth as she needed a ventilator. St. Margaret's goal is to help children learn and grow, despite any obstacle. Through innovative programs, technology and specialized care from our highly trained nursing staff, respiratory therapists, therapy department and attending physicians, we are often able to wean children off of ventilators.

Back in 2014, when Rory was smiling at the telethon, she had already grown bigger and stronger — strong enough to go home — but she didn't have a forever home. Though she no longer was ventilator-dependent, for the past six years, Rory lived at St. Margaret's, receiving long-term

medical care in nurturing and home-like setting.

During her stay, Rory had a chance meeting with Bill and Renee, who were visiting their infant great-granddaughter in the room next to Rory's. Bill and Renee's great-granddaughter required the skilled nursing services that St. Margaret's provides, and Rory was delighted to see the baby.

*“One of the things that I'll never forget is that Rory told one of the staff after one of the weekend visits with Bill and Renee that she wanted to be a fairy so she could grant wishes so everyone could have a family just like she had.”*

“The first time we met Rory, she came into the room, wanting to see the baby. I just remember this little blonde girl just in awe,” Renee recalled.

Sadly, after a brave and courageous fight, Bill and Renee's great-granddaughter passed away,

surrounded by her loving family. Bill and Renee left St. Margaret's heartbroken, but even in a time of overwhelming grief, they kept thinking about Rory. They felt that they crossed paths for a reason, and — even though they have 20 grandchildren and did not plan on growing their family — decided to adopt Rory.

In November, Rory went to her “forever home” with her Bill and Renee. “She's made our life as happy as we've made her life,” Bill said of the joy of having Rory as part of their family.

“It wasn't what we set out to do,” Renee said, “It was just meant to be.”

Rachel Stroll, Social Worker at St. Margaret's recalled Rory's feelings about her new family: “One of the things that I'll never forget is that Rory told one of the staff after one of the weekend visits with Bill and Renee that she wanted to be a fairy so she could grant wishes so everyone could have a family just like she had.”

Rory's story is one of a long and challenging journey, where a little girl's smile and love helped others

turn tragedy and tears into joy. It shows the critical supportive services that children and families receive through St. Margaret's — care in a home-like environment that helps children reach their goals. While we will miss Rory, we are thrilled for her next steps into a bright and happy future. Congratulations Rory!

*“She's made our life as happy as we've made her life,” “It was just meant to be.”*



# Hard work and concern for others: a recipe for success

There's a saying that "the best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up." Michael Lizzi, the 2019 New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) Employee of the Year, embodies this quote every workday, as he's known to wake up very early to arrive at his job before 7:00 AM — usually long before his boss.

*"I want to make sure that they have everything they need to do their jobs,"*

But Mike doesn't show up at his current job as Administrative Assistant at the Mail Fulfillment Center for extra hours or recognition; he does it to support his coworkers. In the early hours of the day, Mike does a walkthrough of the Mail Fulfillment Center at 63 New Karner Road in Albany, making sure everything is in compliance and that the facility is ready for a productive day.

"I want to make sure that they have everything they need to do their jobs," Mike said when discussing his early-morning routine.

Work at the Mail Fulfillment Center is fast-paced

and important, providing services to several New York State agencies under the state's Preferred Source initiative through the New NYSID. The Mail Fulfillment Center also works with municipalities, hospitals, and private businesses such as financial institutions, insurance companies, and energy companies.

Employees handle a variety of tasks, sorting and routing mail, and providing scanning, document composition, design, and delivery services. Mail Fulfillment Center employees pride themselves in their work, delivering high-quality results. Customers save money through outsourcing and taking advantage of presort mailing discounts.

Mike's hard work and support for his coworkers is a big part of the Mail Fulfillment Center's success. According to Center CEO Greg Sorrentino, "Mike is the person you go to when you need something done — it

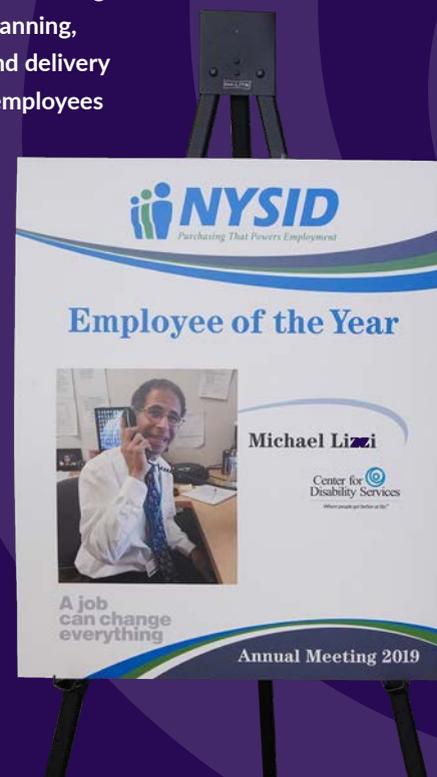
doesn't matter what it is. He's here every day and gives everything he has. One of Mike's strongest qualities is that he makes everybody else around him better."

Mike has worked at the Center in various capacities over the past 25 years and has received services from the Center since his youth. Today, he's a shining example of how our communities thrive through greater inclusion. Mike summarized his job perfectly: "Every day you get to help somebody, you get to help other staff, you get to help people you serve. You get to help yourself, plus you get to help your employer."



## Center Named 2019 NYSID Member Agency of the Year

New York State Industries for the Disabled, Inc. (NYSID) named the Center 2019's Member Agency of the Year for the employment opportunities through the Mail Fulfillment Center. NYSID is a not-for-profit membership organization that creates employment opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities. Its Member Agency of the Year award highlights programs that succeed in providing jobs and creating value for employed individuals and all of New York's communities.



Operating since 1982 in partnership with NYSID



Employing 68 people, 70% of whom are disabled



Serving NYS OTDA, DOH, State Insurance Fund, and other agencies and private businesses



10% minimum customer savings on postage costs



Processing 150,000 – 200,000 pieces of mail daily

# Employee Awards Highlight Community Contributions

In 2019, several Center employees were honored by the Cerebral Palsy of New York State for their work helping support and create opportunities for people with disabilities:

## Staff Recognition Awards

### Betsy Dames, Assistant Manager, Bradford Street

Betsy is motivated and dedicated, willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that people are living a full life, and that is meaningful to them. She is skilled in seeing the whole person and understands the importance of family relationships in people's lives. Betsy helps people think through the pros and cons of the choices they are considering to reach a decision that is good for them.

### Mary Miller, Senior Day Program Counselor, Schenectady Day Habilitation

Mary is a hard-working, conscientious, and generous person, devoted to making a difference in the lives of the people we support. She cares deeply about her community and strives to identify and coordinate meaningful volunteer opportunities. She loves to cook and shares this passion with people on-site through cooking and meal planning activities.

### Chris Morris, Driver, Center Transportation

Chris is highly skilled in defensive driving, providing safe transportation, and his pleasant, upbeat, and cheerful personality, to those we support. Chris is a role model for true professionalism. He is well-liked and respected by all who have the privilege of working with him.

### Patti Roberts, Office Manager, Clover Patch Preschool, Glenville

Patti is an excellent role model, exemplifying how administrative staff can partner with program staff to deliver the most meaningful supports and services. Known for her exceptional teamwork, she is willing to jump in wherever she is needed. There is no task that is too large or too small that she will not undertake.

## John R. Horvath Award of Distinction

### Stephanie Knaust, Chief Accounting Officer

Awarded to acknowledge a member who has made an extraordinary contribution to their community or created opportunities for people with disabilities to be more fully involved in mainstream society. Stephanie has been a member of the Center's staff for 26 years and is a talented leader, team member, and key player across many of the Center's initiatives. Through her knowledge of programs and dedication to the Center's mission, Stephanie serves as an asset to the Center and the community and an example to others.

Betsy Dames

Staff Recognition Awards from Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State are awarded to staff who exemplify exceptional dedication and commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities. The winners are all nominated by their colleagues.

Congratulations and thank you all!



Stephanie Knaust



Chris Morris



Mary Miller



Patti Roberts

## Success Story: Gabe Crushes His Fundraising Goal, Helping Others Get Better at Life

Christian Brothers Academy sophomore Gabe Donovan started a fundraiser in 2019 to help Lilly, a fellow teen and resident of St. Margaret's Center. Lilly needed assistive technology to achieve her education goals and to improve her overall quality of life. Gabe, who was born with a rare genetic condition, neurofibromatosis, and receives services from the Center.

When Gabe learned that Lilly's needed technology was financially out of reach, he decided to do something about it, and his success inspired us all. Gabe created artwork with a flower theme, a piece in chalk pastel that he titled "Adirondack Lilly," and had the image reproduced on t-shirts and tote bags. Gabe hoped to raise \$16,000 for the St. Margaret's Assisted Technology Fund through the effort, enough to cover the costs of Lilly's equipment.

Gabe's shirts and tote bags — and the touching story of helping others in need — became a viral sensation of sorts in the Capital Region, with elected officials, professional athletes, national performers, and community leaders promoting the fundraiser. By the end of 2019, Gabe had not only met his original goal but more than tripled the figure by raising \$50,000!

Gabe made an amazing difference in our community, helping even more residents to live out their goals and dreams. And, "Adirondack Lilly" created greater awareness about St. Margaret's Center and inspired many to join a worthwhile cause.



**\$50,000**  
RAISED  
for the  
St. Margaret's Assisted  
Technology Fund

## New Leadership at Down Syndrome Aim High Resource Center Aims High for the Future



Before appointment, Sue was the director of the Center's Service Coordination Division, responsible for 1600 families. Her personal

grow and enhance the current services but also to refocus services and connect with area families affected by Down syndrome who

*"Remembering that the middle initials of DSAHRC stand for 'Aim High,' we will do all we can to support individuals to achieve what they and their families aim for."*

connection to Down syndrome is her sister, Lauren. Lauren has Down syndrome, lives in a Center residence, and participates in several programs.

are not yet availing themselves of DSAHRC's services. Remembering that the middle initials of DSAHRC stand for 'Aim High,' we will do all we can to support individuals to achieve what they and their families aim for."

In 2019, the Center appointed Sue Williams as Director of DSAHRC, the Down Syndrome Aim High Resources Center at the Center for Disability Services. DSAHRC provides parent-to-parent and professional services and support to individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

Sue has 34 years of experience working in various Human Services management roles, all of them with the Center. According to Greg Sorrentino, CEO of the Center, under Sue's direction, "DSAHRC will be in a position to take on new challenges and create new opportunities. Sue brings both a professional and personal commitment to the mission of DSAHRC."

"I am excited to be in a position to strengthen and enhance DSAHRC's services as part of the Center family," Sue stated. "To do that, we must hear from families and professionals, so we will be investing time and resources into finding out exactly what families, community professionals, and individuals with Down syndrome want and need. Our goal is not only to



# Center for Disability Services

Our wide range of services under a single umbrella allows us to provide a seamless continuum of care as the people we support age or as their needs change.



Whether you need us for the weekend, a week, or a lifetime, whether it's in your home or ours, the Center for Disability Services is here to support you and your family.

Prospect Center  
An Affiliate of Center for Disability Services

St. Margaret's Center  
An Affiliate of Center for Disability Services

Kevin G. Langan School  
At the Center for Disability Services

Down Syndrome Aim High Resource Center  
At the Center for Disability Services

Clover Patch Camp  
At the Center for Disability Services

Camp Spectacular  
At the Center for Disability Services

Clover Patch Preschool  
At the Center for Disability Services

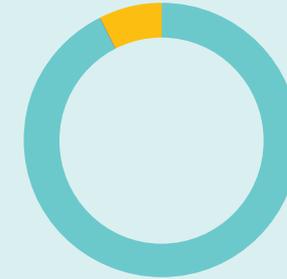


## Financial Summary

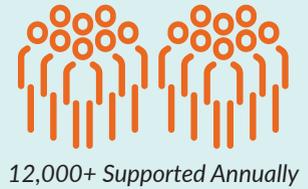
Thank you to our supporters for their generosity.



80+ Locations



92.69% Program Service Expenses  
7.31% Management in General



12,000+ Supported Annually

For additional information of our Audited 2019 Financial Statement, please visit our website [cfdnsny.org](http://cfdnsny.org)

## Please join us and make the Center part of your personal philanthropy and legacy

For over 75 years, the Center for Disability Services has been one of upstate New York's largest providers of programs and services for individuals who have disabilities. The Center for Disability Services is the place *where people get better at life*, but we need your support. Help us in our mission to support others, and make a difference today.

### Ways to Give



Your financial contributions help us support the community.



Make a planned gift and join the Guardian Circle.



Help us provide ongoing services by including the Center in your planned giving efforts.



Donations also accepted directly at [cfdnsny.org/giving](http://cfdnsny.org/giving)

Since your support is so essential to our mission, we have made it easy to help us provide ongoing services and make a positive impact on more lives. Whether you are interested in sending a single one-time donation, or if you'd like to make the Center a part of your recurring charitable giving, we provide numerous options.

Center for   
Disability Services

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*Where people get better at life™*

***“Our commitment to our mission is stronger than ever.”***

*–Gregory J. Sorrentino, President/Chief Executive Officer*

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